KUMARI SELJA: Sir, as is evident from the last two, three questions, there is a lot of demand for including other cities also under the Mission Cities. At the moment, there is no proposal for including any new city, but I would, again, strongly urge that in respect of those cities which are not included under the 63 Mission Cities, we can get proposals from the States under IHSDP. Under IHSDP, we are giving 80 per cent grant and under the Mission Cities BSUP, we are giving 50 per cent grant. As far as Tirupati is concerned, I visited there recently. We were happy to launch the concept of slum-free cities. From the city of Tirupati, we got tremendous response, and I hope that the State Government will take up this challenge in declaring Tirupati as a slum-free city in the country.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Slum is not at all a problem in Tirupati. The floating population...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please one question at a time...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, this is a very important question. Providing basic facilities for floating population...*(Interruptions)*... Slum is not problem...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no; Shri Matilal Sarkar. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the hon. Minister kindly let us know that out of these 63 cities, how many of them belong to North East? I would also like to know whether the city of Agartala is there. If not, what programme will be taken up for Agartala?

KUMARI SELJA: Sir, all the State capitals are included under the Mission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 165.

श्री संतोष बागड़ोदिया: सर, राजस्थान से कम-से-कम एक को तो allow कीजिए ...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, we will take up your question subsequently. We follow the procedure of the House of putting three supplementaries, and, we will continue with that.

Discontinuation of subsidy for Haj pilgrimage

*165. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to discontinue the financial subsidies to Haj pilgrims as per Allahabad High Court verdict; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, in its Order dated 7th May, 2007 has extended the stay on the operation of the Order dated 25.08.2006 in WP No. 3533/1995 of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court.

श्री आमिर आलम खानः सभापति, महोदय, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने केन्द्र सरकार ने हज सबसिडी के मामले में क्या रवैया अपनाया है, इसको उचित ठहराया है और इसको भविष्य में जारी रखने का इरादा जाहिर किया है या इसको उचित नहीं ठहराया है और इसको समाप्त कराने की इच्छा जाहिर की है? सरकार इसको जारी रखने के पक्ष में है या इसको समाप्त करने के पक्ष में है?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, so far as the Supreme Court stay order is concerned, when the judgement of the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court was made available, we went for the Special Leave Petition, obtained the stay order for the year 2006, Phase-II. Similarly, we have obtained the stay order, that means, the existing arrangement can continue for this year also. But the hearing in the Allahabad High Court, Lucknow Bench is still continuing. Last hearing was sometimes in June, and the date for next hearing has not yet been fixed. 1he Supreme Court did not prohibit the High Court to carry on with the hearing of the writ petition, but what action High Court will take or what action Supreme Court will take, Sir, it is not for me, and, most respectfully, I would like to submit that it is also not for the hon. House to speculate on it. This much assurance I can give to the hon. Members, and, through you, to the House that whenever the final judgement would be made available to the Government, the Government will take the appropriate step.

श्री आमिर आलम खानः मान्यवर, मेरा दूसरा प्रश्न भी है।

सभापति महोदय, मेरा दूसरा प्रश्न यह है कि हज यात्रियों के लिए जो कोटा है, आज स्थिति यह है कि दरख्वास्तें ज्यादा होती हैं, जबकि कोटा कम होता है। पहले स्थिति यह थी कि कोटा ज्यादा था और दरख्वास्तें कम थीं। पहले सभी को मौका मिल जाता था, लेकिन आजकल बहुत से लोग हज जाने से वंचित रह जाते हैं, इसलिए सरकार हज कोटा बढ़वाने और यात्रियों की परेशानियों को कम करने के लिए क्या कदम उठाएगी और क्या सांसदों की सिफारिश पर भी माननीय मंत्री जी अपने कोटे से दो-दो लोगों को, जो लोग दरख्वास्तें देते हैं और रह जाते हैं, उनकी दरख्वास्त स्वीकृत नहीं होती है, क्या दो-दो लोगों को वह माननीय सदस्यों की सिफारिश पर भेजेंगे?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, the hon. Member is fully aware that the quota is determined not by the Government, but it is determined by the Government of His Majesty, the Government of Saudi Arabia. And, the formula which they follow is, per one million population, I mean per one million Muslim population of a country, they give a quota of 1,000 pilgrims. In that context, as per India's Muslim population, which as per the Census Report is around 147 million, we are entitled to have a quota—as per the formula of the Royal Government of Saudi Arabia — of 1,47,000. Last year, the Royal Government of Saudi Arabia was gracious enough to give an additional quota of 10,000. This year also, they have given this additional quota. That means, a quota of 1,57,000 will be available to us out of which 1,10,000 will be routed through the Haj Committee and 47,000 will be operated through the private tour operators.

Therefore, we do not have any intention of reducing it, rather we try to get more because, for instance, against the quota of 1,57,000 which is available to us,

the number of applications which we have received is 1,90,000, maybe, a little more; but it is around 1,90,000. Therefore, we are not able to fulfil the demand of all the applicants. But, at the same time, we shall have to agree that a lot of logistics arrangements ought to be made by the Royal Government of Saudi Arabia for this purpose. People from all over the world come in that particular place. In addition to that, Sir, an expert group was set up under you. We are fortunate to have you as the Chairman of this House. Under your Chairmanship, very important recommendations in respect of various aspects of the Haj pilgrimage have been made by this expert group. The Prime Minister also appointed a Group of Minister including me, my colleague, Shri E. Ahammed and the Finance Minister to look into it. We have also considered it. We have adopted most of the recommendations. Now. it is for the Cabinet to give a final nod to it. Therefore, all these aspects are being take care of.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. M.S. Gill. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः मान्यवर, इन्होंने सवाल का जवाब नहीं दिया है ...**(व्यवधान)**... मैंने जो सवाल पूछा था उसका जवाब पूरा नहीं आया है ...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. ...*(Interruptions)*... You have asked your two supplementaries. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः मैंने जो सवाल पूछा था उसका जवाब पूरा नहीं आया है ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापतिः आप दूसरा सवाल पूछा सकते हैं, लेकिन अभी नहीं...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः सर, पहले मुझे मेरे प्रश्न का पूरा जवाब तो मिले ...**(व्यवधान)**... मैंने मंत्री महोदय से सवाल पूछा था कि क्या सांसदों के दो-दो ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापतिः देखिए, आपने अपने दोनों सवाल पूछ लिए हैं ...**(व्यवधान)**... Please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः सर, मैंने सवाल किए हैं, लेकिन उनका जवाब तो नहीं आया है. ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापतिः अब आप क्वेश्चन आवर को चलने दीजिए ...**(व्यवधान)**... मेरी आपसे गुज़ारिश है कि क्वेश्चन आवर को चलने दीजिए ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः सर, पहले आप मेरा जवाब पूरा करवा दीजिए ...**(व्यवधान)**... मैंने सवाल किया था कि क्या सांसदों की सिफारिश पर आप दो-दो लोगों को हज भेजने का मौका देंगे ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापतिः अगर जवाब unsatisfactory है, आप दूसरा सवाल पूछ सकते हैं ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः सर, आप हमारे संरक्षक हैं, हमारी हिफाज़त करने वाले हैं, आप हमारे अल्फाज़ों की हिफाज़त करने वाले हैं ...**(व्यवधान)**... सर, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूं ...**(व्यवधान)**... यहां पर सभी लोगों का ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापतिः प्लीज़ आप क्वेश्चन आवर को चलने दीजिए ...**(व्यवधान)**... आप मंत्री जी से दूसरा सवाल पूछ सकते हैं ...**(व्यवधान)**... Please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री आमिर आलम खानः सर, यह मेरा क्वेश्चन है, मुझे मंत्री महोदय से पूछने दीजिए ...**(व्यवधान)**...

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Most respectfully, Sir, I would like to submit that as I mentioned, as per the practices, which we follow all over the year, that for 100,000 pilgrims, — this year, it is 110,000; for phase II in 2006, it was 1,10,000 — recommendations are made by the State Haj Committees. Now, every day, we receive requests from the hon. Members. Now, if we fix the quota, *i.e.*, two recommendations for each M.P., that means, 543+245=788 M.Ps., I don't think that it would be very fair. But so far as the recommendations of Members of Parliament are concerned, we give utmost consideration to them. Most of the Members' recommendations are being put into effect; and we accept them. But it would be difficult for me to fix some sort of quota distribution because there are a large number of MPs who are not concerned — I want to say with due respect — if it was confined only to minority or Muslim MPs. But I am afraid, as Members of Parliament, we cannot make such a discrimination. So, these things have serious implications. My colleague here is flooded with such requests from everywhere. Some of them are from his constituencies. A majority of Members have their constituencies. I myself represent the second largest Muslim-populated constituency in India. which is next only to Mr. E. Ahammed's constituency, according to the Census Report. Therefore, I am fully aware of the sensitivity of this issue. My colleague is looking into it. Please don't insist upon fixing a quota. As far as possible, we will try to accommodate the recommendations of the Members of Parliament. ...*(Interruption)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Gill, please.

DR. M.S. GILL: Sir, my question is not just to the hon. Minister, but it is also for the entire House. It is a fundamental question of national State policy. What is the policy on subsidising and assisting religious pilgrimage in this country as per the secular Constitution given by Nehru and Ambedkar? That is the first question to be answered. The second point is, about equal treatment to all people. ...*(Interruption)*... Please, I don't need help. It is about equal treatment to all citizens of this country, on whatever policy is being made. It is not today's policy; it existed even before and we all know it.

Sir, my question to the hon. Minister is would he first kindly get this matter resolved even from the Supreme Court, at the earliest possible so that we know what is the ultimate law of this country? Secondly, in the meanwhile, as the policy is being followed, will the Minister also agree to it that Christians and Jews be sent in a similar fashion by air to Jerusalem, that Sikhs do not suffer on trains and

buses and paying Rs. 1100 for 30 miles and be sent by air to Nanakana Sahib and Islamabad and that even the majority of this country is not sent to Mansarovar, *via* Dharchula, to die on the way, but sent *via* Beijing as well as *via* Kathmandu and Lhasa by air?

SHPI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, so far as the first part of the hon. Member's question is concerned, I am afraid the issue is very important and sensitive and we could have a discussion on this. Unfortunately, it is not meant for Question Hour. As per your directions and your predecessors' directions, it is strictly prohibited to take up policy matters for discussion during Question Hour as the time is very limited. The issue could be discussed and debated upon; I have no problems with that. So, I cannot respond to the question on a policy matter.

Secondly, it is not possible for me to give any assurance on what view the Supreme Court would take. But Government's views will be submitted, as they have already been submitted along with the Special Leave Petition through an affidavit.

As far as the third aspect of it is concerned, I do agree and we do provide specific instructions in respect of the progress of two pilgrimages. A large number of pilgrims visit shrines located in Pakistan. Even this very morning, I received notices in the other House in respect of one particular shrine which has been occupied by unauthorised persons and where pilgrims are not able to even come out of the shrine. We are looking into these matters. We shall try to see that as far as possible we provide assistance to pilgrims. We do provide some support to Mansarovar pilgrims — the pilgrimage that is being conducted by the Ministry of External Affairs — as permissible within the existing policy. I shall not make any comparison between this pilgrimage and that. We also provide some support to the Sikh pilgrims, not in terms of money, but in terms of logistics support such as making arrangements for them. But these are all larger issues and I would be too glad to share my perception and listen to the perception of hon. Members through a structured debate. I have no problems with that.

श्री शाहिद सिद्दिकी: सर, मैं आप का शुक्रगुज़ार हूं कि आप ने मुझे सवाल पूछने का मौका दिया। पिछले साल भी सरकार को एम.पीज. की तरफ से recommendations भेजी गई थीं। ये बहुत ज्यादा नहीं होती, लगभग 700 एम.पीज. हैं और अगर वे दो-दो, चार-चार भेजते हैं तो कोई बहुत लंबी लिस्ट नहीं बनती है। पिछले साल, उस लिस्ट को accept किया गया और मुझे यकीन है कि उसे इस बार भी accept करेंगे।

सवाल यह है कि सवा लाख, डेढ़ लाख की तादाद में लोग यहां से जाते हैं तो वहां उनकी देखभाल का proper इंतजाम नहीं होता। इस के अलावा यहां से जो officials भेजे जाते हैं, वे अक्सर किसी merit पर नहीं भेजे जाते। वे इसलिए नहीं भेजे जाते कि वहां लोगों की मदद कर सकें बल्कि सिफारिशी अफसर यहां से हज़ करने के लिए भेजे जाते हैं। वहां डॉक्टर्स, नर्सेस और दूसरे लोगों की मदद की जरूरत होती है। वे नहीं भेजे जाते हैं। तो सवाल यह है कि क्या आप ने इस के लिए बाकायदा कोई पॉलिसी बनाई है कि जो लोग भेजे जाएंगे वे वहां लोगों की मदद कर सकें? इसी तरह यहां से सरकार delegation में लोग जाते हैं, वे वहां लोगों की मदद के लिए, लोगों की problems को solve करने के लिए भेजे जाने चाहिए। वे इसलिए नहीं भेजे जाने चाहिए कि हम को कुछ लोगों को फायदा पहुंचाना है। क्या इस के लिए आप ने कोई पॉलिसी बनायी है?

† **شری شاہد صدیقی :** سر، میں آپ کا شکر گزار ہوں کہ آپ نے مجھے سوال پوچھنے کا موقع دیا۔ پچھلے سال بھی سرکار کو ایم۔پیز۔ کی طرف سے recommendations بھیجی گئی تھیں۔ وہ بہت زیادہ نہیں ہوتیں، لگ بھگ 700 ایم۔پیز۔ ہیں اور اگر وہ دو۔دو، چار۔چار بھیجتے ہیں تو کوئی بہت لمبی لسٹ نہیں بنتی ہے۔ پچھلے سال، اس لسٹ کو ایکسیپٹ کیا گیا اور مجھے یقین ہے کہ اسے اس بار بھی ایکسیپٹ کریں گے

سوال یہ ہے کہ سوا لاکھ، ڈیڑھ لاکھ کی تعداد میں لوگ یہاں سے جاتے ہیں تو وہاں ان کی دیکھ بھال کا پروپر انتظام نہیں ہوتا۔ اس کے علاوہ یہاں سے جو آفیشلس بھیجے جاتے ہیں، وہ اکثر کسی میرٹ پر نہیں بھیجے جاتے۔ وہ اس لئے نہیں بھیجے جاتے کہ وہاں لوگوں کی مدد کر سکیں بلکہ سفارشی افسر یہاں سے حج کرنے کے لئے جاتے ہیں۔ وہاں ڈاکٹرس، نرسز اور دوسرے لوگوں کی مدد کی ضرورت ہوتی ہے، وہ نہیں بھیجے جاتے۔ تو سوال یہ ہے کہ کیا آپ نے اس کے لئے باقاعدہ کوئی پالیسی بنائی ہے کہ جو لوگ بھیجے جائیں گے وہ وہاں لوگوں کی مدد کر سکیں؟ اسی طرح یہاں سے سرکاری ڈیلیگیشن میں لوگ جاتے ہیں، وہ وہاں لوگوں کی مدد کے لئے، لوگوں کی پرابلم کو سولوو کرنے کے لئے بھیجے جانے چاہئیں۔ وہ اس لئے نہیں بھیجے جانے چاہئیں کہ ہم کو کچھ لوگوں کو فائدہ پہنچانا ہے۔ کیا اس کے لئے آپ نے کوئی پالیسی بنائی ہے؟

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: As the hon. Member said, we try our best to accommodate everybody as far as possible instead of just distributing the quota. In respect of disadvantages, difficulties, shortcomings and deficiencies relating to Haj arrangements, we make a review of them every year. The whole purpose of setting up an Expert Group was to look into this aspect. With the assistance and cooperation of experts, recommendations are available. We are implementing them from this year. I do hope that there would be a substantial improvement. But I cannot rule out that there will not be any deficiency or shortcoming. Every year it happens. A system or an in-built arrangement is there to take care of it and to make a review, and to take the corrective steps. Most respectfully, I request the hon. Member to put his suggestions. We can look into them this year also.

SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI: Sir, I could endorse the views expressed by Dr. Gill on the issue that there should be no discrimination among different religions.

† [ ] Transliteration in Urdu script.

Therefore, I would like the hon. Minister to remind that the previous Government had thought in the Cabinet that this subsidy to such religious *yatra* should be reduced step by step. Has any step been taken by the Government?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, surely I do not have the liberty of divulging the decisions of the Cabinet which were not made public. So far as this question is concerned, subsidy is not merely in one area. Subsidies in large areas are being reviewed from the broad economic point of view, but not from this viewpoint that subsidy is given to a particular purpose or a particular pilgrimage and, therefore, it should be reduced. We do not subscribe to that type of view. Yes, one can appreciate overall reduction of subsidy to facilitate and to have a better fiscal management. The approach should not be to reduce the 'X' or 'Y' subsidy of Haj pilgrimage.

The second point is that subsidies are increasing not only because the number of pilgrims are increasing or the cost of operation is increasing or the cost of air travel is increasing. Since 1995, Haj pilgrimage through ships is abandoned. All of them are being transported in a specific period of time through airlines. A lot of logistic arrangements have to be made. We require during a particular period of time a large number of aircrafts which are not available. So, we are helping through Air India and Indian Airlines. They are put into operation and they are doing their best. The cost is also increasing substantially from year to year apart from the number of piigrims, which are increasing year to year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Visit of relatives of PoWs in Pakistan

*166. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN:
SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a delegation of kith and kins of 1971 war prisoners, reportedly lodged in Pakistani jails visited Pakistan recently on an invitation extended by Government of Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether it is a fact that on reaching Pakistan, they were not allowed to visit the jails;

(d) whether Government took up the matter with the Government of Pakistan; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A group comprising members of the families of missing defence personnel visited Pakistan from June 11-14, 2007. They visited 10 jails in Pakistan.